

Training Junior Officers for Tomorrow's Army

Subject Area Training

EWS 2006

Training Junior Officers for Tomorrow's Army
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"... I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills. ..."

– Soldier's Creed

The pilot class of the Army's Basic Officer Leadership Course (Phase II) graduated on 25 August 2005 at Infantry Hall on Fort Benning, Georgia. These 173ⁱ new Army Second Lieutenants were the first graduates of the Army's new company grade officer training program. This program collectively known as the Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC) is designed to dramatically change the way in which the Army trains its junior officers. BOLC is designed to produce leaders who are ready to deploy and lead soldiers into combat.ⁱⁱ These changes to the Army's system for training junior officers are the first but not final step towards a more technically and tactically competent officer corps. Army Officer training is undergoing a profound modification designed to produce officers who better meet the demands of our profession. We still need further alterations in our Officer Education System (OES) if our Officer Corps is to meet the needs of an operating force caught in the throes of a vast organizational transformation while fighting in the Global War on

Terrorism. The newest edition to the OES, BOLC II, will require several modifications prior to its implementation.

Overview of the BOLC Program

A 2001-2002 Army Training and Leader Development Panel Officer Study concluded that the Officer Education System does not provide the company grade officer the necessary skills for success in full-spectrum operations.ⁱⁱⁱ In order to create a more competent and professional officer corps, the panel recommended three-phases of training for junior officers.^{iv} The three phases of the Army's Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC) are outlined below.

BOLC I occurs during pre-commissioning and consists of training conducted at the U.S. Military Academy, Reserve Officer Training Corps, and the Officer Candidate School. The objective of BOLC I is that prior to commissioning every potential officer "be steeped in the Army's values and traditions and will possess clear knowledge of what it means to be an officer."^v

BOLC II will be every officer's initial-entry training. This phase will be six weeks long and concentrate on battlefield leadership, specifically in the contemporary operational environment. The course will

consist of branch-immaterial instruction which will revolve around small-unit leadership and tactics designed to challenge officers physically and mentally. Each officer will undergo training at one of four sites; Fort Benning, Fort Bliss, Fort Knox or Fort Sill.^{vi}

BOLC III will consist of branch specific technical training. Since phase III is different for every officer the courses are not consolidated as in Phase II. Phase III training occurs at each branch's Officer Basic Course (OBC) and occupies from six to fourteen weeks, branch dependent.^{vii} Each officer receives instruction in the distinctive "skills, doctrine, tactics and techniques of their assigned branch."^{viii} After completing BOLC III, officers proceed to their first unit or attend more assignment-oriented training.

While BOLC Phase I and III were operational under the old two phase junior officer educational system, BOLC II is a completely new addition to junior officer training in the Army. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) has been executing trial BOLC II courses since fiscal year 2001-02.^{ix} The pilot classes have led TRADOC to conduct revisions to the programs of instruction (POI). After one more pilot

course at Fort Benning next January, Fort Benning and Fort Sill will begin training all new lieutenants in June.^x

Purpose of BOLC II

The mission of the Basic Officer Leader Course II (BOLC II) is to develop competent and confident small unit combat leaders. The A-Company 1st Battalion 11th Infantry Regiment (A-CO 1/11th IN Rgt) is responsible for the Basic Officer Leader Course II (BOLC II).^{xi}

BOLC II will be comprised of officers from both the active and reserve components. It will be every officer's initial-entry training. The desired product of BOLC II is an officer leader proficient in:

warrior tasks and warrior battle drills, who is self-aware and adaptable, who will not accept defeat and will never quit, and who will demonstrate the characteristics of an Army leader while living the Army values and embodying the Warrior Ethos.^{xii}

This phase will also seek to include lessons learned from the Global War on Terrorism in order to prepare junior officers who may join units already deployed or preparing to deploy.

Maj. Kevin Elder, commander of A Company, 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment, the unit charged with executing BOLC II at Fort Benning, said:

You're looking at future platoon, company, battalion and division commanders. They get this core warrior training, a core knowledge base they'll all have to use to deal with any situation that arises on the battlefield. It's not to make infantrymen out of them, it's to make warriors out of them. What we're trying to do is make sure everyone has an underpinning of being a warrior first; being able to engage a target, read a map, conduct a convoy. It's a lot different, and it's different for the best.^{xiii}

Col. Mark Ritter, 11th Infantry Regiment commander, whose unit will be responsible for BOLC II at Ft. Benning, stated:

Regardless of branch, they will be getting a large dose of warfighting skills, field craft and leadership skills. The officers will go through a common experience to ensure those desired attributes are present in all of our officers. I think it's going to change the Army in a profound way, I think the officers who will lead our Army for the immediate conflict and in the future will be better trained to fight in the contemporary operating environment.^{xiv}

"Leader development - while educating them to think broadly - must prepare them for the complexities on the battlefields they'll see when they join their first units," said Gen. Kevin P. Byrnes, the former commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, during an Oct. 27, 2004, presentation at the Association of the United States Army's annual meeting in Washington.

We're fighting a small-unit war. It's being fought by staff sergeants, sergeants first class, lieutenants and captains every day. They're the ones out on patrol; they're the ones who are in this extremely

complex environment where things change from the minute they leave their compound until they return that evening. They may never get to accomplish the objective they had set for the day because things happen en route. We've got to make sure our leaders are prepared for those complexities and changes and have a framework to refer to, a handrail to grab on to, and an understanding of foundational concepts. Eighty percent of BOLC II will be conducted in a field environment. All officers will receive common instruction before going off to their branch technical courses. This is a major shift.^{xv}

BOLC II, a Closer Look¹

While General Byrnes is correct in that BOLC II is a shift in the way the Army trains junior officers the program in its current form leaves much to be desired if it is to fulfill the high expectations that the leaders quoted above have set for it. There are many areas in the training program which can be improved. In the paragraphs below a more detailed critique of the program is offered.

Currently five of the seven weeks of BOLC II are devoted to training. The first week of training revolves around combatives. The use of combatives is not prevalent in Army training, many officers and units do not train on them. Indeed ROTC and the various Officer Basic Courses have never focused any amount of time on this topic. Giving junior officers a significant amount of training on

¹ For more information on BOLC II the weekly schedule has been included as Appendix I.

combatives could help make knowledge of them more prevalent throughout the Army and help spread the warrior spirit.

A significant portion of the first week along with the entirety of the second week is devoted to Basic Rifle Marksmanship (BRM) with the M-16A2 rifle. While it is undeniable that every soldier should be expert with their personnel weapon by the time the new Lieutenants reach BOLC II they should all be well trained its use. Every Lieutenant will have spent their two to four years of ROTC and the summer spent at Leadership Development and Assessment Course (LDAC) in training which will either be focused on this weapon (i.e. qualification) or that presupposes a working knowledge of the M-16. The time spent on BRM at BOLC II would be better spent on other material that the new officers are not already proficient at.

Five hours are allocated for Night Vision Goggle (NVG) training. While this may sound sufficient every block of instruction is scheduled during daylight hours. This scheduling rules out any practical use of these devices. The utility of such training must be brought into question.

Each platoon in the BOLC class will spend one day each on the following: Convoy live fire, classroom training on day and night land navigation, Forward Operating Base (FOB)

security planning and execution, small unit tactics techniques and procedures (TTPs), IEDs, FOB Operations, Convoy Operations, and a day and night land navigation course. The day spent at the Convoy live fire range is conducted before that devoted to Convoy Operations. This would have the live fire phase of training being performed before the officers have a clear picture of what Convoy Operations entail thus reducing the effectiveness of the training as a whole.

During the week spent on Convoy Operations there is no time allocated to mounted land navigation. Two hours are spent on GPS training; none is spent on the use of Blue Force Tracker or FBCB2. These are the platforms most commonly used for mounted navigation in the operating force. It is likely that the argument will be made that the new Lieutenant's operational unit will provide training on the use of these complex devices. However with the rapid operational tempo it is unlikely that operational units will have the time to conduct proper training on these pieces of equipment.

Week five devotes a day each to Advanced Rifle Marksmanship (ARM), Quick Reaction Force (QRF) drills, and US weapons (M2, M240B, M203, MK19, M249). Also two and a half days are devoted to training on Urban Operations.

These junior officers will eventually serve as platoon leaders and be charged with the employment of crew served weapons. Most ROTC programs do not have access to the weapons or the ranges required to train on the employment of these systems. With BOLC II the Army will have the opportunity to train its junior officers on the use of these weapons. This will take far longer than the day set aside for the task. Week two which is currently allocated to BRM with the M-16 rifle would be better used by focusing on US Weapons with a day each divided between classroom and practical employment/ live fire with the M2, M240B, M203, MK19, and M249.

The week prior to out-processing is spent on FOB mission operations in the Contemporary Operational Environment (COE). This week will be spent entirely in the field and cover such areas as traffic control points, clearing main supply routes, and security patrols. The final week of BOLC III is to be spent conducting out-processing which entails each officer's final counseling and turn-in of their field gear. While these administrative tasks must be accomplished there will be a significant amount of unused time during which we incorporate classroom instruction.

One striking omission of the BOLC II is the total lack of training on fire support. Very few of these officers will be able to conduct live fire calls for fire or close air support (CAS) at their Officer Basic Course. BOLC II provides an opportunity to give each officer experience in employing these supporting arms. An additional week added prior to Convoy Operations week would allow the officers to become comfortable with conducting calls for fire and incorporate artillery and CAS into the rest of their training.

Conclusion

The Army's Officer Educational System is undergoing a transformation to better support the operating forces by producing a more capable, combat-ready officer. The training is designed to be highly valuable to those deployed to the current operational environment. Our junior officers must have a greater understanding of the employment of the small unit and supporting arms in order to maximize the combat power at their disposal. While BOLC will improve Army Officer training we still need further alterations to BOLC II to maximize the limited training we have for junior officers.

APPENDIX 1

30-Sep-05							
DAY	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
DATE							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	OFFICER INPROCESSING						
0600	REPORT FOR DUTY / PLATOON TASK ORGANIZATION	PT	PT OVERVIEW	PT	PT	PT	TACTICAL FOOT MARCH (8.1 KM)
0700							
0800		PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST
0900							STUDENT LED AAR
1000		FIRST SERGEANT BRIEFING MED-SCREEN	ASAP / FINANCE / RECORDS / POV / ID CARD	PHYS EXAM / BOLC II COUNSELING INITIAL COUNSELING	IMMUN / DENTAL / POA / WILLS / TRICARE / AUSA / RED CROSS	DENTAL / PHYS EXAM PART II	STUDENT LED SAFETY BRIEF
1100							STUDENT PREP / NO SCHEDULED TRAINING
1200		LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH/SPOUSES ORIENTATION PROGRAM	LUNCH	
1300		MOVEMENT					
1400		COMPANY COMMANDER ORIENTATION	ASAP / FINANCE / RECORDS / POV / ID CARD	PHYS EXAM / BOLC II COUNSELING INITIAL COUNSELING	IMMUN / DENTAL / POA / WILLS / TRICARE / AUSA / RED CROSS	DENTAL / PHYS EXAM PART II	
1500						MOVEMENT	
1600		BATTALION / BRIGADE COMMANDER ORIENTATION	MOVEMENT			INFORMAL RECEPTION WITH MENTORS	
1700			COMMAND GROUP WELCOME				
1800		MOVEMENT	MOVEMENT			MOVEMENT	
1900		DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	
2000							
2100							
2200 +							
		STUDENT TRAINING PREP (TLPs FOR WEEKS 2 AND 3)					

30-Sep-08							
DAY	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
DATE							
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	COMBATIVES						
0600	NO SCHEDULED TRAINING	PT	PT	PT	PT	PT	STUDENT PREP / RETRAIN / NO SCHEDULED TRAINING
0700		BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	
0800		COMBATIVES					
0900							
1000							
1100							
1200							
1300		PERSONAL HYGIENE / LUNCH / WEAPONS DRAW					
1400		TAKING CHARGE OF A PLATOON	AIMSS 1 (BORELIGHT) / AIMSS 2 (CCO)	AIMSS 3 (ANPVS 7/14)	BRM 1	BRM 2 / FUNDAMENTALS OF MARKSMANSHIP	
1500				AIMSS 5 (ANPEQ-3A)			
1600				PARTICIPATE IN A MEDIA INTERVIEW			
1700		DINNER / WEAPONS TURN IN					
1800		STUDENT TRAINING PREP			STUDENT LED AAR	STUDENT LED AAR	
1900					STUDENT LED SAFETY BRIEF	STUDENT LED SAFETY BRIEF	
2000							
2100					STUDENT TRAINING PREP	STUDENT TRAINING PREP	
2200 +							

30-Sep-05							
DAY	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
DATE							
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	QUALIFICATION						
0600	NO SCHEDULED TRAINING	PT	APFT / PT	APFT / PT	PT	PT	PT
0700		PERSONAL HYGIENE / WPNS DRAW / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / WPNS DRAW / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / WPNS DRAW / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / WPNS DRAW / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / WPNS DRAW / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / WPNS DRAW / BREAKFAST
0800		MOVEMENT TO RANGE					
0900		BRM 4 (GROUPING) (2,3,4,5,1)	BRM 5 (ZERO) (DAY 17: 4,5,1,2,3) (DAY 18: 1,2,3,4,5)	BRM 8 (FIELD FIRE II) (3,4,5,1,2)	BRM 10 / 11 (PRACTICE QUAL AND QUAL) (DAY 20: 5,1,2,3,4) (DAY 21: 2,3,4,5,1)		
1000							
1100							
1200							
1300							
1400							
1500							
1600		MOVEMENT TO REAR					
1700		DINNER					
1800		STUDENT LED AAR	STUDENT LED AAR	STUDENT LED AAR	STUDENT LED AAR	STUDENT LED AAR	STUDENT LED AAR
1900		STUDENT TRAINING PREP - 1,2,3,4 AIMSS 5 (AN/PEQ-2A FAM FIRE) 2	STUDENT TRAINING PREP - 2,3,4,5 AIMSS 5 (AN/PEQ-2A FAM FIRE) 4	STUDENT TRAINING PREP - 1,3,4,5 AIMSS 5 (AN/PEQ-2A FAM FIRE) 1	STUDENT TRAINING PREP - 1,2,4,5 AIMSS 5 (AN/PEQ-2A FAM FIRE) 3	STUDENT TRAINING PREP - 1,2,3,5 AIMSS 5 (AN/PEQ-2A FAM FIRE) 5	STUDENT LED SAFETY BRIEF
2000							STUDENT PREP / RETRAIN / NO SCHEDULED TRAINING
2100							
2200 +							

30-Sep-05									
DAY	SUN	MON		TUE		WED	THU	FRI	SAT
DATE									
	29	30		31		32	33	34	35
		PLT	PLT	PLT	PLT				
		1,2,3	4,5	4,5	1,2,3				
	URBAN ENVIRONMENT								
0600	NO SCHEDULED TRAINING	PT	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PT	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PT	PT	PT	STUDENT LED SAFETY BRIEF
		PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	WEAPONS DRAW	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	WEAPONS DRAW	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	LAND NAV RETEST (AS REQUIRED) / STUDENT PREP / RETRAIN / NO SCHEDULED TRAINING
0700									
0800		MOVEMENT TO RANGE	MOVEMENT TO RANGE	MOVEMENT TO RANGE	MOVEMENT TO RANGE	MOVEMENT TO RANGE	MOVEMENT TO RANGE	MOVEMENT TO RANGE	
0900		ARM	RANGE CARD AND WEAPON MAINTENANCE / INTRODUCTION TO U.S. WEAPONS (M2, M240B, M249, MK19, M203)	ARM	RANGE CARD AND WEAPON MAINTENANCE / INTRODUCTION TO U.S. WEAPONS (M2, M240B, M249, MK19, M203)	URBAN OPERATIONS	URBAN OPERATIONS	URBAN OPERATIONS RETRAINING	
1000									
1100									
1200									
1300									
1400									
1500									
1600									
1700		MOVE TO FOB	MOVE TO FOB	MOVE TO FOB	MOVE TO FOB			CLEAR RANGE	
1800		GRF REACTION DRILL AND AAR	FOB	GRF REACTION DRILL AND AAR	FOB			MOVE TO FOB	
1900								DINNER	
2000								MOVE TO REAR	
2100								NO SCHEDULED TRAINING	
2200 +	FOB					FOB			

30-Sep-08											
DAY	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT				
DATE											
		UNIT PT WILL BE CONDUCTED DURING NON-MISSION TIME IN THE FOB									
	FOB MISSION OPS										
0600	NO SCHEDULED TRAINING	PT	FOB MISSION OPS				PT				
0700		PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST					PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST				
0800		MOVE TO FOB									
0900		FOB OPS / ROAD TO WAR					WEAPONS / EQUIPMENT CLEANING BOLC B COUNSELING				
1000											
1100											
1200											
1300		DISMOUNTED OPERATIONS MASS CASUALTY SITE; ENEMY WEAPONS CACHE; CORDON AND SEARCH; MASS GRAVE SITE; TRAFFIC CONTROL POINT; PATROLS	FOB OPERATIONS CKPT OPS; GUARD DUTY; SECURITY PATROLS; QRF				LUNCH				
1400							WEAPONS / EQUIPMENT CLEANING AND TURN IN BOLC B COUNSELING				
1500			STUDENT LED AAR								
1600			CLEAR FOB								
1700		MOUNTED OPERATIONS CLEAR M3R; IED REACT TO CONTACT				MOVEMENT TO REAR	DINNER				
1800						WEAPONS / EQUIPMENT CLEANING AND TURN IN BOLC B COUNSELING					
1900						STUDENT LED AAR					
2000						STUDENT LED SAFETY BRIEF					
2100						NO SCHEDULED TRAINING					
2200 +											

	30-Sep-06						
DAY	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
DATE							
	43	44	45	46	47		
	OFFICER OUTPROCESSING / CLEARING						
0600	NO SCHEDULED TRAINING (STUDENT LED SOCIAL EVENT)	PT (APFT RETEST)	PT	PT	PT	TRAVEL	
0700							
0800		PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST	PERSONAL HYGIENE / BREAKFAST		
0900							
1000		PLATOON OUT PROCESSING BOLD II COUNSELING AER COUNSELING	PLATOON OUT PROCESSING / BOLD II COUNSELING AER COUNSELING	BOLD II OUT PROCESSING / 3-4 TURN-IN / 270 MID COUNSELING AER COUNSELING	GRADUATION		
1100							
1200		LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH			
1300		PLATOON OUT PROCESSING BOLD II COUNSELING AER COUNSELING	PLATOON OUT PROCESSING / CIF TURN- IN / BOLD II COUNSELING AER COUNSELING	PLATOON OUT PROCESSING / CIF TURN- IN / BOLD II COUNSELING AER COUNSELING			
1400							
1500		MOVEMENT		GRADUATION PREP / REHEARSAL			
1600		INFORMAL RECEPTION WITH MENTORS					
1700			DINNER	DINNER			
1800		DINNER	PLATOON TRAINER TIME				
1900							
2000		PLATOON TRAINER TIME					
2100							
2200 +							

ⁱ Donna Hyatt, BOLC II pilot course graduates: Phase teaches small-unit tactics, 29 August 2005,
<http://www.satfa.monroe.army.mil/PPD/BOLCIIPilotcoursegraduates.htm>.

ⁱⁱ Hyatt

ⁱⁱⁱ Capt. Robert L. McCormick, Army Officer Education System Transformation New Basic Officer Leadership Course will change the way the Army and Air Defense Artillery trains newly commissioned ADA lieutenants, Air Defense Artillery, January-March 2005,
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2005/050100-educationsystem.htm>.

^{iv} McCormick

^v Triggs

^{vi} Triggs

^{vii} Triggs

^{viii} Lisa Alley, *BOLC Gets Green Light for Officer Education*, 11 March 2005,
<http://www.mccoy.army.mil/ReadingRoom/Triad/03112005/BOLC%20gets%20green%20light%20for%20officer%20education.htm>.

^{ix} Alley

^x Hyatt

^{xi} 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment Homepage, 28 October 2005, <https://www.infantry.army.mil/BOLC/>.

^{xii} McCormick

^{xiii} Hyatt

^{xiv} Spc. Brian Trapp, Fort Benning Slated to Pilot New Officers Course, 25 November 2003,
<http://www.tradoc.army.mil/pao/TNSarchives/November03/114503.htm>

^{xv} Army Public Affairs, Army Announces Initiative to Transform the Officer Education System, 22 February 2005,
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